

2005 NOAA Fisheries Employee of the Year Nomination Narrative

Nominee's Full Name:

Category for which Nominated:

Christopher Luecken

Administrative/Support Employees (GS 1 – 10)

Address at Least One of the Following Factors in the Justification Below.

Contributions to NOAA and NOAA Fisheries programs that resulted in:

- Enhanced safety or health of NOAA Fisheries employees;
- Enhanced staff morale or inspired NOAA Fisheries excellence in others;
- Improved customer service;
- Increased efficiency and/or reduced cost of operations;
- Improved equal employment opportunity or diversity in NOAA Fisheries;
- Strengthened ties to other NOAA elements or NOAA Fisheries constituents; and/or
- Unusual credit to NOAA Fisheries or its staff.

Chris Luecken is an invaluable member of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center's administrative team. He handles procurement actions such as purchase orders and serves as a Contract Officers Technical Representative (COTR) on contracts. Chris also works with credit cards and assists with the logistics of workshops and meetings at the NWFSC. Although there are several procurement personnel at the NWFSC, what is unique about Chris is his positive attitude which fosters great morale, an inherent unquestionable positive work ethic that contributes to great customer service, and the ability to maintain an active knowledge of procurement resources that contribute to increased efficiency and operational cost reductions. Chris works in a very busy office that essentially supports the entire NWFSC, when it comes to procurement. While there are other procurement individuals who support their own divisions, Chris provides support to those needing assistance at the Center level rather than the divisional level. An example of this difference is Chris's role as the COTR on the MES administrative support contract and his new role as the COTR on the Frank Orth Contract. These contracts are managed at the Center level to support all the divisions at the NWFSC. As the COTR of these contracts, Chris works well with both the Contracting Officers and Contracting Specialists at the Western Administrative Support Center (WASC), to manage the contract; and with the NWFSC staff who utilize these contractual resources to gain necessary services. When staff members are in need of utilizing of these contracts, Chris is helpful, easily explains the options available, explains the way the contract works, and assists in completing the necessary work to utilize these service contracts. For example, FY05 saw the end of the ORISE program here at the center. The end of the ORISE program was a sensitive issue for staff, including FTEs, contractors, and ORISE appointees.

As the Point of Contact for the Center, Chris diplomatically answered questions and attempted to make the transition as painless as possible for all involved. Several appointees had their terms cut short and had to be transferred to contracting positions. Others were transferred at the time their ORISE appointments expired. In all, these transfers involved close to 50 staff and their respective project leaders and teammates. Chris accomplished this in an exemplary manner, insuring that staff morale was maintained at a high level despite the overall anxiety and high tensions that typically accompanies similar traumatic events.

In addition to managing contracts, Chris is also helpful in procuring products that may be able to be purchased through smaller purchase orders or on credit cards. Chris often has the knowledge of where to obtain the best quality and prices for products and is able to save money. For FY 2005, NWFSC OMI submitted to WASC approximately 180 requisitions for processing which represents an increase of 26 requisitions over FY04. Preparation of requisitions involves the review of statements of work and vendor quotes, verification of accounting information, review of sole source requests, confirmation that requests conform to procurement regulations, and monitoring of procurement cut off dates. All requisitions were completed and submitted in a timely manner so that WASC could award the purchases and obligate the funds. Additionally, FY05 was somewhat more hectic due to a large number of facilities-related projects funded by NMFS HQ in the amount of \$1.15M that required special attention by Chris. Due to circumstances beyond his control, Chris had to play a major role in obtaining quotes and writing Statements of Work for many of these projects on a very tight deadline. Because of his dedication to the task, all the funding was spent and the projects awarded. Without his concerted efforts, funds may not have all been expended which would have been a considerable embarrassment to the Center and reduced the likelihood of further funding from the agency in the future.

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Despite the large numbers of individuals Chris supports, he always maintains a smile on his face. When you have a question he usually has the answer, and if he doesn't, he has a good idea of where to get the answer. Chris is straightforward and realistic with the information he provides, for example lead times to obtain items or for contract awards. These qualities are inherent in providing good customer service to the employees at the NWFSC, and Chris has them all. One may not consider his role as a customer service role, but we view his role as providing administrative customer service to scientists who benefit from the service he provides. His approach to his position and how he works well with the employees at the NWFSC, indeed is great customer service to those at the NWFSC.

In addition to enhancing and improving customer service, the positive and helpful attitude Chris has when working with both employees within the NWFSC and with those at the servicing offices such as the Western Administrative Support Center, fosters great morale. Knowing that one can work easily with Chris to solve a problem or obtain a product you need, is a great relief. Knowing there is someone who is helpful, listens to your questions, keeps oneself in a good frame of mind. When staff leaves his office smiling and laughing, it has a domino effect on those they interact with. This provides a good feeling about procurement and administration services provided by Chris. Many staff refer their colleagues to check with Chris for assistance with their questions.

The procurement resources Chris has and continues to build create a large catalog of choices for scientists and other NWFSC employees whom need access to products and services. By maintaining good relations with commercial vendors and other entities that provide products and services to the NWFSC, Chris has streamlined and increased the efficiency of obtaining the items needed by staff. The good relationships with vendors may also lead to easier procurement transactions which reduce the burden hours on the staff to achieve their procurement needs. The less time scientists have to work on the logistics to support their science, the more time they can focus on their science. Therefore, Chris's actions essentially may contribute to increased efficiency indeed!

Chris's participation in the logistics of meetings and workshops helps display the NWFSC as a respectable place that patrons and visiting scientists will remember as a professional location they wouldn't mind visiting again. He helps maintain the professionalism of the NWFSC, and contributes to the positive image of the NWFSC to others. Chris works hard and tirelessly to provide a great administrative service to all the employees at the NWFSC. He indeed improves customer service, morale, and efficiency through his everyday efforts. These qualities are inherent in his work ethic and are indeed above and beyond getting the job done.

During Chris' tenure with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, numerous compliments regarding Chris' customer service skills have been received.

For example: From Dr. Michelle McClure, "A quick note to let you know that Chris Luecken has been doing a fabulous job with everything he handles for me, but especially with ORISE -- he's made sure I got my forms in time, and has resolved a couple smallish problems very quickly. He's a keeper." From Diane Tierney, "He helped me figure out my file cabinet dilemma and saved us over \$100 because now we don't need to buy one! I found a key to an existing file cabinet that didn't have any metal separators (basically useless) so he stopped what he was doing and went and found some... he's great and always so willing to help you!" From Cliff Church and Karrie Hanson, "Well, what the heck, since Karrie has made reference to this I might as well chime in here. I hope I don't embarrass Chris by saying this, but a lot of us over here in the East building feel that Chris is a tremendous asset to the Center. His can-do attitude, eagerness to help people, and his ability to get things done has made our work lives so much easier. Thank you Chris! Cliff" "Thank you so much Chris! You made the purchasing through the GSA process, once deemed cumbersome and confusing, as simple and easy as can be. Much appreciated! Karrie" From Dr. Yonathan Zohar of the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute dated May 11, 2005, "...I would like to than those who helped in that process, especially Chris Luecken for your great patience." Note: In addition to Dr. Zohar, Chris assisted other members of the Laboratory Program Review in obtaining their Dunn & Bradstreet numbers and CCR's in order to quickly process the required purchase orders.

Chris never hesitates to assist someone needing help. His "can do" attitude and willingness to help coupled with his friendly personality make him an invaluable asset to the Center. It is a pleasure to nominate Chris for the Employee of the Year award.